

# IRL

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## AMERICAS

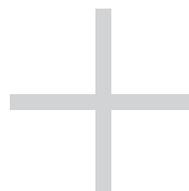
*Forecasters are predicting as many as 4 major hurricanes this season, and Hurricane Harvey has already made an impact on businesses in the United States. Now is an optimal time for small business owners to revisit and update disaster preparedness and recovery plans.*

~ By Jim Goss

[ARTICLE BEGINS ON PAGE 17](#)



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**PLUS**

**SYNOPSIS** PAGE 9

**ABCRM REVIEW** PAGE 11

**AMERICAS** PAGE 17



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**BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES:  
GETTING YOUR BUSINESS  
PREPARED FOR HURRICANE  
SEASON**

*By Jim Goss*

Hurricane season is once again in full swing, but is your business ready should a catastrophe strike? Last year was the most active hurricane season in a half-decade, with [damage from Hurricane Matthew alone topping \\$10 billion](#) and flashbacks of the economic losses from past storms like hurricanes Sandy and Katrina. According to the National Federation of Independent Businesses, 30 percent of small businesses will be impacted by a natural disaster at some point, and the financial impacts can linger for years. Even today, the effects of Sandy and Katrina continue to inform how businesses in high impact regions protect their offices, equipment, manufacturing facilities, and employees.

Hurricane season officially began on June 1st, and, while the season lasts through November, the most destructive storms are expected between August and October. Forecasters are predicting as many as 4 major hurricanes this season, and Hurricane Harvey has already made an impact on businesses in the United States. Now is an optimal time for small business owners to revisit and update disaster preparedness and recovery plans.

Importantly, businesses should prepare contingencies for direct hits from a major storm as well as lingering utility outages and supply chain disruptions. Transit disruptions, power failures and storms impacting suppliers and vendors can all have trickle-down impacts on small businesses that can close the doors. And, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency, almost



**Jim Goss**

Jim joined Stephens Insurance in 2009 as Vice President, providing Risk Management services to large public and private clients. Prior to joining Stephens, he spent six years providing similar services at Regions Insurance, formerly known as Rebsamen. Prior to joining Rebsamen, Mr. Goss had 17-plus years of experience as a Risk Manager and head of related departments for two Fortune 500 companies (retail and telecommunications/information technology) as well as seven years of insurance carrier experience as a claim adjuster and supervisor. Mr. Goss has had extensive experience with loss-sensitive programs including self-insurance, captives and retrospectively rated plans. He was EVP of a captive operation with a third-party business and also established a claims self-administration department as Risk Manager, including the development of a technical claims processing system. A graduate of the University of Central Arkansas, Mr. Goss is past President of the Arkansas Chapter of the Risk and Insurance Management Society.

<https://www.stephens.com/insurance/our-team/>

Tel: (501) 377-2625

40 percent of small businesses that close during a disaster never reopen. Owners and managers can get ahead of these disruptive forces by giving close consideration to four key areas:

- Planning:** As the hurricane season nears its peak, meet with your staff to discuss safety procedures and contingency plans in the event of a storm. Ensure key personnel know and understand the procedures for preparing, reporting and mitigating any potential losses from storms, as well as documentation that will be needed in the event of a claim. Assign specific responsibilities to staff members as needed. Remember, partial "proofs-of-loss" will be critical to getting the doors open again when submitting claims after a storm.
- Process:** Review disaster recovery procedures and processes in the event of a hurricane – how to communicate, keep employees safe and keep (or get) the lights on. If you've changed anything about your business recently, be sure to take those changes into account and update your plan accordingly. Remember to take advantage of services from your insurance provider when possible. For example, some providers will review disaster plans and provide suggestions to clients to maximize the plan's impact.
- Coverage:** Stay current with your insurance coverage. Is your business located in a flood zone? Does your policy include coverage for destructive wind-driven rain? Do you have off-site storage that might be impacted by a storm? Has anything significant changed with your business operations that might increase your exposure to storm risk? Ensure that your

insurance properly covers your business for today.

- Support:** Understand what resources are available to you in the event you need to submit a claim, and keep primary contact numbers close at hand. In the event of a storm, be sure to engage the right support for your claim, and be sure to provide the proper documentation.

To ensure the continuity of your business after a major weather event, it's critical that your management and staff are prepared beforehand. This includes both providing proper guidelines for what to do before, during and after a storm, as well as understanding your insurance coverage and preparing contingencies for what recovery looks like, should a storm hit. Building a plan in advance of storm season will help to significantly ease the process of coping with a storm if it occurs, and will help you to understand how best to reduce risks to your business.

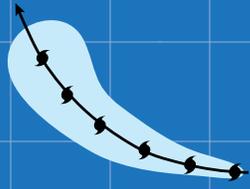
For further information from Stephens Insurance on how to prepare for hurricane season and ensure you and your employees stay safe during a storm, [contact our team](#). [IRL](#)

Hurricane season 2017 is under way. The three main forecast centers predict:

 11-17	NAMED STORMS
 5-9	HURRICANES
 2-4	MAJOR HURRICANES

## NOW IS THE TIME TO ASSESS YOUR DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

- 1 MANAGEMENT**  
 A current plan must be in place for personnel
- 2 EMPLOYEES**  
 All personnel should be informed and aware of the plan
- 3 SUPPLIERS & VENDORS**  
 All personnel should be informed and aware of the plan



Other information sources: [FEMA](#)